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OUR COLORED PLATE.

In our colored plate, given on opposite page, we show a combination of patterns for ceiling decoration, panels, medallions and borders.

We believe this to be a new departure in journalism, as we have yet to see any periodical giving plates of this character. We think that it is unprecedented for quality and quantity of designs shown, for number of colors used, and for the excellence of the lithographic work, which, it is thought, will compare favorably with the best productions of other countries.

For the purpose of showing the colors used, we have had a square of each put upon the margin of the plate. This will prove an aid to art students, and all who may be studying the combination and harmony of colors.

It may be, that neither of the ceilings given will be thoroughly acceptable to all painters or frescoers, but we believe that they can discover, in some corner or more prominent place, that which may be turned to good use, and though it may figure as a border to a ceiling in our plate, it may as readily fill a panel or a cartouche in some other work. The colors are, to a great extent, our own arrangement, and they are not to be considered arbitrary by any means, merely illustrating the harmony of those selected.

The circular ornament with bordering above and below, in the upper right hand corner, is from an illuminated copy of the Koran. The style is Arabian, showing slight Persian influence. The effect of the upper border may be heightened by deepening the green background, and in the other a darker blue would intensify the appearance. We have striven to give a soft, even tone.

The ceiling in the upper left hand corner is from the German. We have thought well in this design to make the colors somewhat deeper than the original, the character of the work requires, we think, a positive treatment. This, however, is very much a matter of personal preference.

The ceiling in the lower right hand corner is French. It is full of ideas, and we produce it principally on that account.

The eight golden panels in the lower left hand corner are imitations of Raphael, and made in the Seventeenth Century. The ornamental part of these panels may be in gilt against a light background. The effect in both instances is excellent.

The piece of border, at the extreme lower left hand corner of the sheet, is Renaissance work, and in that also the use of colors may be reversed, so that the ornament will be gold upon a blue ground.

We think it well to repeat, at this point, the purpose which has to a great extent, governed us in the selection of designs for this plate. We proposed furnishing suggestions, and we think the woodcarver may find some appropriate decoration here for pilaster, border or panel, and so, too, the worker in clay, stucco or cotta.

REVIVAL OF ART NEEDLEWORK
AS A DECORATION.

BY HENRY B. WHEATLEY.

NEEDLEWORK from the earliest times, has been considered to be the most appropriate of employments for women. Penelope's never-ending labors, although they were of little utility, have become a sort of ideal, and we read of the "divers colors of needlework" in the Bible, as well as in the Iliad and Odyssey. Materials for the history of needlework must also be sought among the relics left by the Romans and other ancient nations. Although embroidery will last for many long years, we could hardly expect that any fragments should have come down to us from classical times. We know, however, the materials which the ancients used, and their designs are to be found on frescos and pottery. We can thus tell how important a part classical needlework played in the ornamentation of buildings, and how eminently architectural much of the work of the ancients was. The same ideas of decoration that were adopted by the Greeks and the Romans, are to be found in the Persian, Indian and Moorish schools, although very much varied in their application. During the middle ages in Europe, needlework was a common accomplishment of the ladies, but the work they did was mostly ecclesiastical. It was intended largely for use in the services of the Church. In "Orlando Furioso" we read:

Each virgin soon apply'd
Her ready skill, and wrought of golden thread
A costly net, which o'er a pall they spread
Of finest silk.—(Book xxii "Hoole's Translation.")

These hearse cloths or palls were often very

handsomely worked, and some of them have come down to our time in a state of good preservation. Several of the Companies of the City of London possess these relics of an old custom. Herbert writes in his "History of the Twelve Companies:" "That no due token of respect might be wanting, in celebrating the funerals of deceased members—indeed, that they might be buried with a degree of grandeur, worthy the consequence of the fraternities they belonged to—almost the whole of these fraternities appear to have had a state pall."

There was one exception to this rule as to the production of ecclesiastical work, but that was a very important one, viz.—the so-called Bayeux tapestry, which is said to have been worked by court ladies under the direction of Queen Matilda.

In Anglo-Saxon times the art of needlework was in its prime, and the term *opus Anglicanum* shows the high esteem in which it was held. Eadmer, who went with the Archbishop of Canterbury to a council at Bari, A.D. 1098, specially mentioned that a cope given many years before by Ægilnoth, the Anglo-Saxon Primate, to an Archbishop of Benevento, was unmatched in beauty by any other vestments he saw in Italy, or which were worn in that numerous assembly of bishops.

At the Reformation the ingenuity of the ladies was diverted into entirely new channels, and embroidery was used for a variety of objects. The making of carpets came to be a favorite occupation.

In 1548, George, Lord D'Arcy, left to his daughter Agnes, wife of Sir Thomas Fairfax, his "best wrought silk carpet, bordered with crimson velvet, which she made," and Sir William Drury, of Hawsted, county Suffolk, bequeathed to his wife Elizabeth, "one carpitt for a cupboard, of those which were her own making." These carpets were used for hangings and for table covers. Then came a period of decay in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, only broken by such achievements as the pictures of Miss Linwood and her pupils, which however beautiful in themselves must be condemned as the result of misapplied talent, because they were imitations and nothing more. Every art has its own proper functions, and it cannot but be degraded when its followers condescend merely to imitate another art.

Nothing could well be darker than the condition into which artistic needlework had fallen. Walls were cold and cheerless, and the use of hangings was forgotten. Certainly furniture was sometimes covered with the work of facile fingers, and we have, ourselves, seen a set of high backed chairs in a nobleman's country mansion, covered with the old court waistcoats of a former head of the house.

At last the time of revival came. In 1872 some ladies of rank, with H.R.H. the Princess Christian at their head, founded the School of Art Needlework at a house in Sloane Street, London, "for the two-fold purpose of supplying suitable employment for gentlewomen, and restoring ornamental needlework to the high place it once held among the decorative arts." During the next three years the school largely increased, and in 1875 it was removed to larger premises in Exhibition Road, immediately adjoining the Royal Horticultural Gardens.

The spirited endeavor of these lady workers to raise the standard of art, has been greatly helped by the wide Æsthetic revival of our day. This is not the place to speculate upon the origin of the Æsthetic movement, farther than to note that if not actually due to the School of Art Needlework, as some assert, it has been very practically helped on by the labors of these ladies. Some leading artists attached to the movement, as Mr. William Morris, Mr. Walter Crane, the Messrs. Wade, the Rev. Selwyn Image and others, have assisted in the work of the school by designing some of the most charming works. The origin of Æstheticism may really be traced to a period long anterior to 1872, although it had not then grown to the dimensions it has since attained. To it we owe a deep debt of gratitude for teaching us how to decorate our walls. The cold naked spaces which once were common, have given place to bits of glowing color, and those who have sufficient taste can arrange their ornaments, their china and their pictures on back-grounds of varied beauty.

The arras and tapestry of bygone days are out of date, for our habits are changed, and these heavy hangings are not suited to the requirements of our time, but it is something to know that the embroidery of to-day can be made to aid in the decoration of our rooms, and that it is largely used for that purpose.

The School of Art Needlework has just now been employed on a beautiful object of this character. A short time ago the Duke of Westminster gave a commission for a panel of needlework, to be designed for a room of his mansion, Eaton Hall, near Chester, by Miss Jekyl, and worked by the school. The design, which consists of flowers

treated conventionally, but arranged with consummate taste, is worked in finely blended colors on drab silk. There is no angularity, but the whole design is arranged with a free hand and a genuine spirit of unity of treatment, in which exuberance is not allowed to degenerate into extravagance. When the Duke's marriage was arranged he ordered some more of a similar character for the same room. Five additional panels have now been produced. Two of them are narrower than the others, and there is one for the top of the door. This is a noble mode of ornamenting a room, and we trust that the example set by the Duke of Westminster may be largely followed, for no form of decoration, for a handsome room, can be more appropriate or pleasing to the eye. These panels are now placed in the position reserved for them, but they had been exhibited for some time previously in the show-rooms of the school.

Of a different style, but very handsome in its way, is the door, by Walter Crane, with two female figures, one bearing the legend "Salve," and the other that of "Vale." This design, hanging in the showroom at Kensington, is eminently architectural in treatment.

So much for the decoration of the walls. The various objects of furniture can all be ornamented by this means, for instance, there is a beautiful piece of work intended for the back of a piano, which was designed by the Rev. S. Image, and exhibits the wonders of music. Screens can be decorated with an endless variety of designs. Here is one showing four elegant female figures—Juno, Venus, Minerva and Proserpine—with their appropriate emblems worked on hand-made linen. A screen with clematis worked on brown velvet is a triumph of naturalism which forms a most desirable ornament. A novelty in screens is one for afternoon tea, in which the brackets can be let down when not used as shelves, for teacups; the panels are worked on green satin to match the wood of the screen.

Mirrors are now being largely put into worked frames. Here is an oval glass in a frame of work on plush, and also a square one with a flat brass frame, let in with blue plush worked in Japanese gold. Cabinets with worked doors, chairs, couches, table covers, hangings and curtains all exhibit the skill of the art needleworker.

We have described some of the objects in the show-rooms, and will now mention a few of the materials used in producing these objects. Various linens are required for small articles such as chair backs, sofa backs, &c. Serge, diagonal cloth, silk sheeting, velveteen, plush, *soie sauvage* and *satin de chine* are most suitable for curtains. For screens and other furniture, satin is used as well as the above. Hand-made linen is considered the best for outline work, panels, and designs of figures, &c. The materials with which the work is done are bobbin silks, twist silk *filoselle*, crewels, Japanese gold, &c.

The gold basket work and the charming honeycomb are now being largely used as groundworks.

Ecclesiastical work is being done at the school, and a handsome altar cloth for Pontresina Church for presentation by the Princess Christian is now on view. The scroll on the retable is very effective, and the orphreys on the front are excellent.

There is much other work, such as articles of dress and objects of the house, going on in this hive of happy workers, which is managed with true artistic feeling, but we pass them by, as our present purpose is merely to deal with that revival of art needlework, as a decoration, which has done so much to make our homes tasteful.

A new artist—that is, comparatively new—has certainly taken a decided hold upon the tastes and fancies of the New York public—a public, fickle (as it has been termed) possibly in its admirations, but, nevertheless, critical and discriminating in its judgment. Certain photographers and portrait painters in this city have so long been referred to as models in their art, that it is an exceptional compliment to the talent of a younger artist, to place him at once upon the level of these older authorities. Mr. Marc Gambier, however, has earned this distinction undisputably, and his work is art entire. The pose of his figures, and the absolute freedom from conventionality in everything he undertakes, gives his sketchings, and paintings, and crayons and photographs a charm that is irresistible.

Mr. George R. Halm, whose name is familiar to readers of art papers and lovers of art work, has taken charge of the artistic end of *The American Agriculturist*, and we have no doubt under Mr. Halm's management, the success of this long neglected feature will assume the proportions of a "boom."

This Colored Plate contains Ten Colors, as shown by the diagram on the lower margin. The plate that will accompany our next number will contain Four Colors. The next plate will be of Ten Colors; the next, of Four Colors. Our purpose, in thus varying the number of colors used, is that we may thus present designs of moderate as well as highly finished character, affording opportunity for decoration of different values.

About Three times during the year we will probably omit this colored plate, and in its place add four or more pages to our regular edition, giving the finest pictures and designs, applicable to the purpose of decoration, that we can find in foreign publications.

We shall be thankful for suggestions from interested persons.

